

Message Text

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43

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SUBJ: COUNCIL OF STATE APPROVES STATE OF SIEGE

REF: BOGOTA 5187

1. THE COUNCIL OF STATE LATE ON JUNE 6 CONCLUDED THAT THE SECURITY SITUATION IN COLOMBIA JUSTIFIES A STATE OF SIEGE. INDICATIONS WERE HOWEVER THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD DELAY FOR A TIME BEFORE INVOKING SPECIFIC POWERS AND WOULD CONTINUE TO WATCH DEVELOPMENTS TO DETERMINE WHEN AND TO WHAT DEGREE EMERGENCY POWERS WOULD BE USED. THE COUNCIL'S REPORT WILL BE PRESENTED OFFICIALLY TO THE GOVT THE MORNING OF JUNE 7 AND WAS REPORTEDLY TELEPHONED LAST NIGHT TO PRESIDENT LOPEZ AT THE PRESIDENTIAL COUNTRY RESIDENCE.

2. THE COUNCIL REACHED ITS CONCLUSION FOLLOWING A MEETING WHICH WAS ALSO ATTENDED BY THE MINISTERS OF GOVERNMENT, DEFENSE AND THE ACTING MINISTER OF LABOR. A SIGNIFICANT DEPARTURE FROM USUAL PROCEDURE WAS THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE COUNCIL'S CONCLUSION. NORMALLY, THE COUNCIL'S REPORT IS TRANSMITTED CONFIDENTIALLY TO THE GOVERNMENT, WHICH THEN MAKES IT PUBLIC IF IT WISHES. THIS TENDS TO SUPPORT THE THEORY THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS TRYING TO CREATE A PSYCHOLOGICAL CLIMATE WHICH WOULD INSTIL

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CAUTION IN THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY, WHERE DEMONSTRATIONS

ARE PLANNED FOR JUNE 9-11. IN ADDITION, LOPEZ WOULD PROBABLY RATHER NOT PROCLAIM A STATE OF SIEGE UNLESS HE IS SURE HE MUST. HE SEES HIS ADMINISTRATION AS POPULARLY-BASED, WITH STRONG EMPHASIS ON PERSONAL LIBERTY. HE WILL NOT ONLY BE EXTREMELY RELUCTANT TO USE THE SPECIAL POWERS ONLY TEN MONTHS INTO HIS ADMINISTRATION, BUT WILL ALSO WANT TO GIVE THE APPEARANCE OF GREAT RELUCTANCE, IF ONLY TO MOLLIFY THE LIBERAL PARTY'S LEFTIST WING. SIGNIFICANTLY, ALTHOUGH THE STATE COUNCIL VOTED 11-5SMN FAVOR OF JUSTIFYING A STATE OF SIEGE, THE LIBERALS ON THE COUNCIL DIVIDED EVENLY, 4-4.

3. STATES OF SIEGE ARE FAR FROM UNIQUE IN MODERN COLOMBIAN HISTORY. SINCE MID-1948, THE COUNTRY HAS LIVED UNDER STATES OF SIEGE FOR ALMOST 15 YEARS. DURING THE FOUR YEARS PRECEDING THE LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION, A STATE OF SIEGE EXISTED FOR ALMOST THREE YEARS.
WHITE

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